RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY COLLECTIONS

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THE HOYLE TAVERN

From a daguerreotype taken in 1857 by G. L. Hurd.

See page 33. *Photograph on file in the Society's Library.*

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H. ANTHONY DYER, *President* GILBERT A. HARRINGTON, *Treasurer*
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The Old Hoyle Tavern

By HORACE G. BELCHER

Few localities in Rhode Island have been better known to greater numbers over a long period of years than the V-shaped junction of Westminster and Cranston streets, now named Canonicus square but still termed Hoyle square by many. For this was the site during seven generations, of the famous old Hoyle Tavern, one of the first taverns opened on the West side of Providence and for nearly a century and a half one of the best known places of resort in or near the old town founded by Roger Williams.

Located at the junction of the highway to Moshantituck —later the Cranston road and now Cranston street—and that leading to Newtaconsonutt, long known as High street and now called Westminster, two great tides of travel passed its doors and united in front of it, to flow into the town by its main highway. One came from Connecticut through the Western farming and manufacturing towns of Rhode Island—down the New London Turnpike,

through Coventry and Cranston; the other from the Plainfield, Hartford and Norwich Turnpikes, flowing through Olneyville from the Northern and Northwestern towns—Burrillville, North Smithfield, Smithfield, Glocester, Scituate, Foster, Johnston—a section of farms and small, often isolated mills, much of it far more densely populated a century ago, than now.

Down these roads came great teams hauling raw materials and finished products from the small mills whose stone skeletons may yet be seen along many streams whose remote situations did not weigh against the water power they furnished; drovers with herds of cattle; farmers with loads of produce for barter in the town; stage coaches with travellers eager to stretch their legs and get something to wash down the dust in their throats before the last long stretch of road into Providence.

These coaches came from Connecticut towns and Rhode Island villages; from Hartford, through Scituate; Hartford, via Pomfret; Norwich via South Scituate; Danielson and North Scituate; Cranston; Clayville via Simmonsville; Hartford and Norwich via Scituate Four Corners; Cranston; Olneyville. They passed at all hours on every day save Sunday, those to the most remote points reaching the Hoyle outward bound in the early morning of every other day, inward bound in late afternoon or early evening. The Olneyville stage ran daily, every hour from Providence.[1]

It was a never ending stream of travel, passing on both sides of the old tavern as it stood inside the point of the V looking toward the town at the junction of the two main roads, on the very site where stands today the building of the Citizens Savings Bank.

Year after year the old tavern stood there, until a century passed and half of another; until it became the best known tavern of the town, a landmark and directing point. To say "It's near the Hoyle" was to identify the location of any point instantly, to all save the stranger here. Even today,

[1] *Providence Directory*, 1850, 1855-56.

years after the name of the open space in front of the bank was officially changed by the city, it is generally known by its old name of Hoyle Square, or to older residents as "The Hoyle."

Yet although the Hoyle Tavern was carried on by various proprietors nearly a century and a half before the old hostelry was removed to make way for a business block which in turn was replaced by the modern bank building now standing on the site, the tavern which to the end bore his name was in charge of a Hoyle but 13 years. The name remained on the sign and the impress of his identity on the place, although he served his last flip there in 1796 and was not even the first to open the tavern. Nor was this the first Hoyle Tavern in the town, although the earlier one is now almost forgotten and its name and location is uncertain.

The legend on a picture of the house which for years hung in the old sitting room of the tavern, gave the date of opening as 1724.[2] The date most generally accepted for many years was 1782[3] and the tavern was said to have been named after the man who built and opened it and who also had a Hoyle Tavern, less well known, out in Triptown, the present Manton.[4]

But Col. Joseph Hoyle, whose name remained on the sign to the end, did not become owner of the house until 1783[5]—and a tavern had been carried on there for many years previous to his purchase of the place. Moreover, there had been a Hoyle Tavern in Providence for years before any buildings were erected at the intersecting roadways to the hill towns of Rhode Island and the Connecticut hill country beyond.

The first mention of a Hoyle as a tavern keeper is on the

[2] *History of Providence County*, Edited by Richard M. Bayles, Providence, 1891.

[3] *Ibid.*, and manuscript account of *Old Providence Taverns*, by Dr. Franklin C. Clark, now (1933) in possession of Howard W. Preston.

[4] *History of Providence County*, Bayles.

[5] *Deed Book 20*, Section 2, page 723, *Providence Land Records*.

sixth of July, 1728, when in the entry of the Town Council meeting of that date "Doctr Hoyl" is listed among the 12 appearing "to take Licence." He paid 2 shillings, 10 pence.[6]

Dr. John Hoyle, first of several of this name, is mentioned by Staples in his "Annals of Providence" as "one of the most active and efficient of the number" that composed the society organizing what now is the First Congregational (Unitarian) Church. He must have been a man of firm convictions and positive action, for in 1721, during a controversy over the proper location for the new church edifice, he visited neighboring colonies to solicit financial aid and after raising money in Connecticut and Massachusetts, on his return began erecting the church near the junction of the present Broad and Westminster Streets.[7]

He did this without consulting others, after buying the land. "So great was the dissatisfaction at the conduct of Dr. Hoyle", says Staples, "that the house was torn down after it had been partially finished, and tradition says, in the night time."

Dr. Hoyle was born in Bury, in Lancaster, England, April 4, 1685[8] and was buried in the graveyard he established on his own land, February 11, 1766. The Hoyle burial plot was at what now is the corner of Broad and Moore Streets, still an empty lot growing up to brush.[9] This plot was in Cranston until the extension of the Providence city line in 1868.

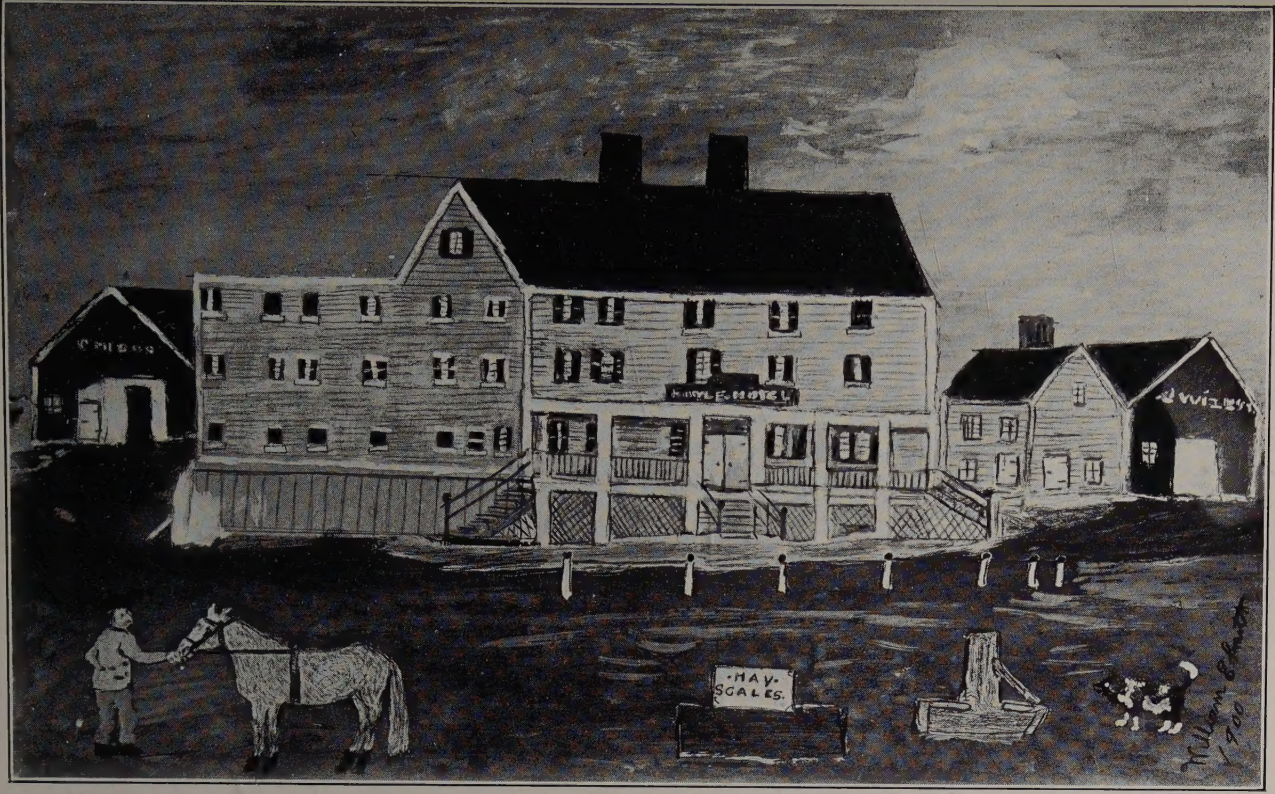
In his will Dr. Hoyle left 15 pounds to the town of Cranston for care of this burial plot, but the trust was not executed and the condition of the lot finally became so neglected that two of his descendants had the bodies removed to Locust Grove Cemetery on Elmwood Avenue.[9] The gravestones with the exception of two large ones that

[6] *Early Records of the Town of Providence, reprint*, Vol. 12, page 87, Providence, 1897

[7] *Annals of Providence*, by William R. Staples, Providence, 1843.

[8] *R. I. Historical Society Collections*, Vol. 25, page 112, October, 1932.

[9] Mrs. George W. Carr, direct descendant of Dr. John Hoyle.



A PAINTING OF THE HOYLE TAVERN

In the Society's Museum.

stood just beside the tomb, were replaced in the new cemetery. The two larger stones, one of them headed with the name of Dr. John Hoyle, were given to the Rhode Island Historical Society and placed in the society's exhibits.

The land originally purchased by Dr. Hoyle for church purposes was roughly centered by what now is Fenner Street. Late in the Eighteenth Century the family home was near the corner of the present Westminster and Bridgham Streets.[10] The name has been perpetuated in Hoyle Street as well as in memories of the old Hoyle Tavern. The family is all but extinct, the last survivor being Mrs. George W. Carr, widow of one of the best known Providence physicians of another generation.

In the records of a Town Council meeting held July 14, 1729, mainly for the granting of licenses, is this entry: "—it is voated that those that will haue Licence shall Giue after the same Rate that they Gaue the last yeare and that John Hoyle is accepted in the Roome of fiernot Packard and John Randall Jn in the Roome of Edward Potter & accepted 2-x-0-0." John Hoyle paid that day 2-10-0.[11]

August 3, 1730, the Council granted 14 licenses, including one to John Hoyle, the record reading: "Mr. John Hoyle hath payd 2-10-0."[12]

Again two years later, he appears. The Council met August 14, 1732 mainly for the granting of licenses and the entry reads: "John Hoyle is to haue a Licence for the sum of 50 shillings: in a reasonable time."[13] His tavern must have been on the "Towne Row," now North and South Main Streets, one of the most desirable locations, for he and William Hopkins were the only ones to pay 2 pounds 10 shillings fee. The other six paid two pounds only.

Next year he met opposition. August 18, 1733, at a meeting "mainly to Grant Licences and Licence Tavern keep-

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] *Early Records of the Town of Providence, reprint*, Vol. 12, page 88.

[12] *Ibid.*, page 90.

[13] *Ibid.*, page 93.

ers," the record says: "john Hoyle appeared to take Licence and was Rejected by a voate of the Councill."[14]

This was six years before the first license was granted at what we know as the Hoyle Tavern and more than half a century before Col. Joseph Hoyle bought the already successful inn to which he gave his name.

This John Hoyle of Cranston was his grandfather. The interruption of the license must have been merely temporary, for in his will, made April 16, 1758 and recorded February 6, 1766, five days before his burial, John Hoyle "of Cranston" directs his son James, father of Joseph, to "asist his mother in her business, her paying him for it." He divided his lands in Cranston and his house in Providence among his widow and three children, left sums of money to grand-children as well as 15 pounds to "the town of Cranston treasury" to maintain his Hoyle graveyard and continued:

"And further my will is that children should be loving each other and to their mother and she the same to them and I would pray that they would think that their poor Mother and Father had no body to give any thing to them and that I have labored hard to get a few pence for them and hope God will bless them with the same."

The "few pence" proved a sizable fortune for the times. His estate inventoried 2887 pounds, 10 shillings, old tenor and included a silver mounted sword and "cain," articles proving him to have been a man of position as well as substance.[15]

From such sturdy stock as this, came the tavern keeper so long remembered at the junction of the two main roads into Northern and Western Rhode Island.

The present site of the Citizens Savings Bank building formed a part of a small tract of land laid out to Andrew Harris in 1712, comprising nearly 12 acres.[16]

[14] *Ibid.*, page 45.
[15] *Providence Probate Records*, Book W-5, page 411.
[16] Manuscript of Dr. Franklin C. Clark.

John Angell, grandson of the first Thomas, one of the original settlers of Providence, bought it from Harris in 1714 and resold it to his brother, Joseph Angell in 1722, the deed being dated May 24.[17] The Highway to Moshantituck, now Cranston Street, was laid out through one corner of the land.

At this time there were no improvements on it, for none is mentioned in the deed.

Joseph Angell had held possession of the land for 12 years when on February 21, 1734-5, he sold a triangular piece "one acre more or less, situated on Weybosset Plain, a little Southwest from the dwelling house of Ebenezer Knight," to Timothy Blanchard, blacksmith. The land conveyed extended Easterly and was bounded on the West by land afterward owned by John Carter. Its North bound was the highway to Newtaconsonutt, its South bound the "highway that leads to Moshantituck," the East bound being "in the corner where said two highways meet." This deed did not mention any buildings or improvements on the land.

The "highway leading toward Newtaconsonutt" was for many years known as High Street, the street beginning at the New Market, at the junction of Pawtuxet Road, now Broad Street, and running to the Johnston line. It is now called Westminster Street which in the days of High Street extended only from the West side of Weybosset Bridge, to High Street. The "highway that leads to Moshantituck" was Cranston Street, which formerly ran from 164 High Street to the West boundary line. This road was laid out in 1717.

Blanchard built a dwelling house on the land, for when in 1739-40 he conveyed this acre of land to Obadiah Brown another blacksmith, for a consideration of 200 pounds, a dwelling house thereon was mentioned in the deed, which read "with my dwelling house, being my house thereon standing, it being my homestead." The deed to Obadiah

[17] *Ibid.* and *Deed Book 5*, page 210, *Providence Land Records.*

Brown was dated March 3, 1739-40. This house was later the Hoyle Tavern.

Obadiah Brown later became owner of Starve Goat Island in the upper bay, off Washington Park, now home of the Providence Floating Hospital Association. In the deed to the island, as in one made to him by Zachariah Mathewson, dated January 5, 1746, he is described as "innholder."[18]

Obadiah Brown was the first to open the inn which in later years was so well known, the first license being granted March 14, 1739-40 to keep "a Publick Ale House." He paid 17 shillings six pence fee, for license to run until the following September, the usual date for granting licenses.[19] He must have been popular and successful from the start, for from 1742 to 1745, the Town Council met at his tavern.

Obadiah Brown died early in 1753 and left his house and furniture for the use of his widow during her lifetime. In his will, dated April 25 of that year, he described himself as "a yoeman, alias innholder." His inventory shows he was possessed at the time of his death, of a punch bowl and drinking glasses, as well as a cask of rum. The term "yoeman" then denoted a well to do man lower in social rank than a gentleman well born and above a "goodman."

Here, then, was the beginning of the Hoyle Tavern as an inn—March 14, 1739-40—the house itself being four or five years old at that time. From this period until early in 1887 when the last license holder retired and the rooms in the old building were used as a lodging house, it was one of the best known places in Rhode Island.

In those early days taverns were kept in the houses of the proprietors and the whole family assisted in the duties of entertaining guests. The license granted William Hopkins by the Providence Town Council December 13, 1731,

[18] Letter signed "S" in Providence *Sunday Journal*, 1888, reprinted in *Narragansett Historical Register*, Vol. 6, page 313, July, 1888.

[19] Dr. Franklin C. Clark manuscript.

was "to keep a Publick aile house tipling and Victling house in the house where he now Liveth in Providence." The fee was 40 shillings, although Jeremiah Brown was that day granted one for 26 shillings.[20]

The fee paid for a license depended on the situation of the inn. The Town Council ordered, March 10, 1721, the rate set at 20 shillings for those "that Lieues adjoyneing to the Town street" that is, the road between the foot of the hill and the water's edge, now North and South Main Streets. "And these others that are Remote from said Towne att the time of there taking there Licence shall pay downe the sum of fifteene shillings money—at the expiration of the year each person shall pay enough to make up 40 shillings."

August 18, 1724, the Council "Voated that Each person that is Licenced to Keepe a Tauern in the Towne Row shall pay the sum of 50 shillings downe; takeing in Zachariah Mathewson and William Allen also and these that are Licensed in the Woods shall pay the sum of forty shillings downe Each." The woods were at the very edge of the town, which then spread only a short distance on the West side of the river. As late as 1776 it extended only about a mile along the Towne street on the East side.

The early inns were small, as were all the houses in Providence. Later they were enlarged as they were built to accommodate more custom. But always the best among them maintained a high reputation for hospitality. Rev. Dr. Dwight writing of the New England inns of the early part of the last century said: "In a word, you found in these inns the pleasures of an excellent private house. If you were sick you were nursed and befriended as in your own family. To finish the story, your bills were always equitable, calculated on what you ought to pay and not upon the scheme of getting the most which extortion might think proper to demand."[21]

[20] *The Colonial Tavern* by Edward Field, Providence, 1897.
[21] *Ibid.*

The old Sayles tavern, sometimes called the Pidge Tavern after the successor of Sayles, still standing on North Main Street nearly opposite the Pawtucket car house, is one of the few remaining Rhode Island examples of the earliest type of dwelling house inn remaining unaltered. Here the liquid cheer was served from a small closet opening from the large living room on the ground floor. The bar itself was a shelf set on the lower half of a Dutch door to this closet. The Hoyle Tavern to its very end retained the old kitchen barroom almost unchanged, although this was succeeded in the later days of the establishment by a large and more modern barroom in an ell added to the original structure on the High street end.

The innkeeper was one of the leading citizens of the town. In early Massachusetts he ranked in importance after the minister. In Rhode Island as elsewhere in New England, he often held office and usually was a man of much influence. The first Town Clerk of Providence kept an inn and the Town Council often met there. Thomas Fenner, who kept tavern at "his house in the woods" near Neutaconcit in Providence, was "Major for the main," which gave him command of all the militia on the mainland in Rhode Island. Besides this he was a justice of the peace, store keeper and a surveyor of no mean ability.

William Turpin, licensed in Providence in 1731 and other years, was Town Treasurer. The General Assembly sat in the Turpin house, located on the West side of the present North Main Street. The list of licenses granted by the Providence Town Council July 6, 1717, numbering 13, was headed by Lieut. William Harris and "Sarjant William Turpen"—the same who became Town Treasurer. James Sabin, who kept the tavern at South Main and Power Streets where the Gaspee plot was hatched, was a Colonel.

The tavern was the resort of everyone in the town, for the use of ale and liquor was universal, even by the clergy; there all the news centered; there politics originated and public movements started; any public meetings held, were

at the tavern. It was the centre of town life, town politics, town activity—even of town history in many cases.

Licenses were issued only to men of good character. In Providence as in other towns, the Town Council usually met at the house of some one of these licensed tavern keepers and dined there at the expense of the town at these meetings.

"The constituted authorities then deemed it proper to patronize the houses they licensed and there does not appear any great disproportion between the amounts charged for dinners and for the liquor that followed them," says Staples in his "Annals of Providence."

"for instance: a bill in the City Clerk's office charges, April 3, 1757, six dinners at 5 pounds 8 shillings; punch two pounds; May 28, seven dinners at 6 pounds 6 shillings; punch 2 pounds." Luke Thurston in a bill similarly preserved, charges for the Town Council, "dinners, &c; dinners and liquor; dinners, punch and wine."

The number of tavern licenses in Providence varied in several years, but generally was between 20 and 30, the highest fee paid being 12 pounds. In 1749 Providence had 31 tavern keepers. There were then 3177 whites, 225 negroes and 50 Indians in the town, a total of 3452, giving an inn for every 111 persons. In 1750 there were 30 taverns, the highest fee being then eight pounds, paid by only three of the tavern keepers.[22]

Providence still is one of the smallest American cities in area although a leader in population, yet until 1868 Parkis Avenue marked its Southern boundary with Cranston, on the Pawtuxet Road, now Broad Street. At the time the Hoyle Tavern was first opened, the town lay for a mile along the Easterly side of Towne Street, the present North and South Main Streets, its later growth first extending up the hillside along which the Proprietor's lots lay, behind this main highway.

[22] Staples' *Annals of Providence.*

Weybosset Bridge, crossing the river to reach the section on the West side which at one time it was proposed to make a separate town with the name Westminster, was several times destroyed by tides and freshets and in 1746, the year in which Obadiah Brown was first described as innholder, was rebuilt with the proceeds of a lottery and widened to 18 feet.

The roads were unbelievedly poor, both in the town and outside it and progress over them was slow—one reason why taverns were often located every mile or so. The earliest travel was by horseback and it was well along in the century that saw the opening of the Hoyle Tavern, before stage coaches became general.

Describing the condition of the roads at the time, Samuel Thurber wrote: "May, 1776, I went to Pomfret, 36 miles, in a chaise; the road was so stony and rough that I could not ride out of a slow walk but very little of the way. I was near two days in going. Such was the general state of our roads at the time.

"About this time there would be, now and then, a person who wanted a passage to Boston. Col. William Brown, who lived quite at the Northeast corner of the town, on a farm, kept what was called a curricle, drawn by two horses; he would be their carrier. It would take him about three days to go and return."[23]

The main roads were improved but little until many of them were taken over as turnpikes by private corporations which collected toll in return for their improvement. These turnpike companies came much later—the Norwich Pike, which began at the Hoyle being opened in 1794 and continuing until 1857. This was a branch of the Douglas and Providence Pike, one of the three turnpikes permitted to enter the town while privately owned. It ran down Westminster to the corner of what is now Stokes Street, thence along the line of Plainfield Street to Cranston, South Sci-

[23] Samuel Thurber's letter in Staples' *Annals of Providence*. . .

tuate and Richmond, to the Connecticut State line near Oneco.[24]

The Hartford Turnpike, now a State road still known as the Hartford Pike, ran for part of its way over the Providence and Norwich Pike. It extended through Scituate and reached Connecticut at Killingly. With such roads, travel was necessarily slow and a day's journey was a short one. Taverns at frequent intervals were a necessity of the times.

The Hoyle was first a stopping place for farmers and others using the two main roads that passed it on either side and later, as the town grew and living conditions became easier, was a popular place of resort for the young people of the town. It became noted as a place serving good cheer in liquids and food, the objective of sleighing parties in winter and of evening drives in summer.

"Situated as it was, far out in the country, with no bridge to cross the river from the East side, the jovial parties of young men and women had to go far out in the country in their excursions to wind up in a dance and a good time at the Hoyle" says one chronicler. "It was the earliest tavern on the West side.[25]

It is a bit difficult to understand this reference, for such detours were necessary only when Weybosset bridge, which had been built before the tavern was first opened, was in repair or had been carried away. It is possible that this may refer to the tavern opened by Dr. John Hoyle at a much earlier date and situated in Triptown, the present Manton.

This quotation probably refers to the statement of William Woodward, who told Stephen D. Olney "that in the days of his youth when the young folks on that side of the river wanted to get up a dance or ball, they had to go out into the country to get at a tavern to be accomodated, which he said was the old Hoyle Tavern and sometimes on

[24] Providence *Sunday Journal*, January 25, 1890.
[25] *History of Providence County*, Bayles.

account of the bridge being out of repair, they had to go around over Smith's Hill and Olneyville to get at the tavern."[26]

To the end of its career it retained its popularity as a resort for horsemen and farmers and when the buildings were sold at auction in 1890 preparatory to clearing the site, these former customers made up a very considerable part of the crowd attending the sale.

Obadiah Brown must have been successful from the start of his tavern, for its location between two main roads was excellent and its owner continued to buy property. After his death in 1753, his widow Martha carried on the tavern for a quarter century until her death in 1778.[27] The first license found in her name was dated October, 1753. She was allowed to keep a victualling house and to sell liquors on the usual conditions, to preserve order on the premises and to permit no gambling or other unlawful practices.

Widow Martha died at the close of 1778. She had only a life interest in the property which she managed so well for a full quarter-century, the longest tenancy of any license holder in the history of the tavern. She left what must have been a prosperous and profitable inn but there is no record of any other host there until Col. Joseph Hoyle took it over in 1783. He bought the property from the devisees of Obadiah Brown for 2000 "good Spanish milled dollars," which at the scale of depreciation adopted in June, 1781 was equivalent to $320,000 Continental old emission.

Col. Hoyle already owned land in that vicinity and nearer the river, for he had been buying at intervals since 1772, starting with land adjoining his own on Union street, adding a piece near Dock street and in 1777 and 1778 buying from other children of James Hoyle, their shares in the estate of their father.

Some of this land, like that of his sister Phebe whose one

[26] *The Old Taverns of Providence* by Elisha Dyer, in *Narragansett Historical Register*, Vol. 5, No. 2, page 145, October, 1886.

[27] Dr. Franklin C. Clark manuscript.

and one-half acres was an award in her successful suit for her legal share (1778) and that bought in 1782 from Anthony and Lydia Westcott for 108 Spanish milled dollars was described as being "near Widow Martha Brown" so he apparently was reaching out to reunite the acres scattered by his father's death. In the earlier deeds he is termed "cooper" or "cooper, alias yoeman," but from 1777 on he is described as "yoeman." The Providence land records show 17 transfers of realty to him.

The deed was dated April 22, 1783. That was the day on which Providence celebrated the cessation of arms proclaimed by Congress on the 11th of April, following the signing of the treaty of peace between the United States and Great Britain at Versailles in January—the official end of the War for Independence.

The morning opened with a discharge of cannon and the ringing of bells in the town. The Continental frigate Alliance, then in Providence harbor, was decked with flags, as was the rest of the shipping. A civic procession escorted by the Artillery, marched from the house of Deputy Governor Jabez Bowen to the Baptist meeting house, where Rev. Enos Hitchcock, minister of the First Congregational Society of which Dr. John Hoyle was one of the founders, preached a sermon followed by an oration by Asher Robbins, later of Newport but then a tutor at the college here.

After the services at the meeting house, the procession marched to the court house, where the proclamation of Congress for a cessation of arms was read from the balcony, followed by a discharge of cannon from the State House parade, and a battery on the East hill near the beacon. The proclamation was also read in two other places, after which the procession returned to the State House where a dinner was served, followed by 13 toasts, each under a discharge of 13 cannon. In the evening the State House and the Market House, now the Chamber of Commerce building in Market Square, were illuminated and a display of fireworks closed the day.[28]

[28] *Annals of Providence*, Staples.

(*To be concluded*)

Alleged Runic Inscriptions in Rhode Island

By Edmund B. Delabarre

The first hint that the Vinland of the Northmen was in the vicinity of Narragansett Bay was given just about a hundred years ago, by Professor Rafn of Denmark, in the book called *Antiquitates Americanae*. The idea took firm hold of popular imagination and material evidences of the Northmen's presence were eagerly sought and ardently defended.

The evidence to be gathered from the Sagas themselves is conflicting and uncertain. Attempts to interpret it in terms of definite localities have been numerous and vacillating. Of recent writers, Edward F. Gray ("Leif Eriksson," 1930) tries to prove from the saga descriptions that the Norse headquarters were on Martha's Vineyard and Nomansland; while Dr. Wilfred Grenfell ("Romance of Labrador," 1934) is equally sure that they were in Labrador. Both of them examine every item of evidence with skill and care. The reader who, like myself, pretends to no expert knowledge on the subject, is inclined to agree with each as he reads him but to decide in the end that so far the question has not been settled. The situation is well expressed by Henry C. Kittredge in his book on "Cape Cod," where he says: "Human nature too readily bends the large phrases of the sagas to fit the contours of any desired landscape. The wisest men and the best authorities unite in their skepticism regarding all such alleged Norse itineraries."

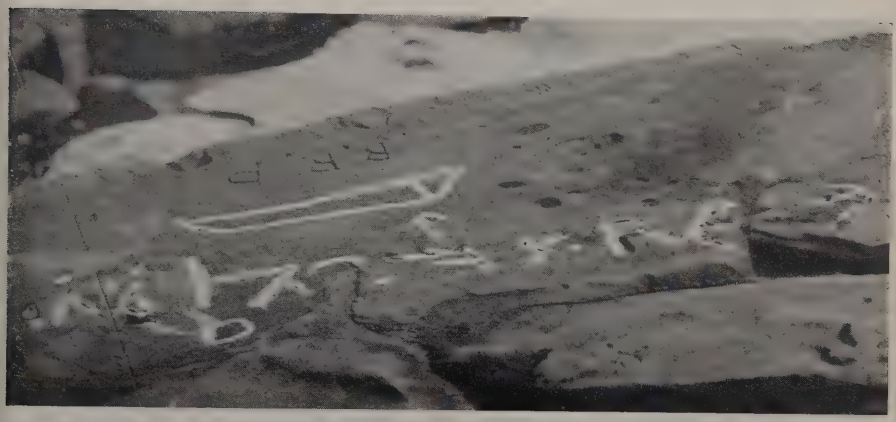
With reference to alleged material records and indications of their presence, however, the case is entirely different. There is nothing dubious about them. If any unquestionable instance of the sort could be discovered it would be of the utmost importance. Time after time candidates for this dignity have been advanced, but one after another they have fallen in the light of careful examination and sound

criticism. They have been defended with much more of emotional wish to believe than with credible evidence. Nevertheless, the widespread popular desire to prove the presence of Northmen in these regions persists with remarkable but understandable fervor. It never yet has been rewarded by calmly acceptable verification. Like Dighton Rock, the inscribed rocks at Tiverton, Portsmouth, and Mark Rock in Rhode Island have been proved to bear no runic records. Like the famous "skeleton-in-armor" in nearby Massachusetts, the stone tower in Newport has been proved to have had no commerce with the Northmen; it is what remains of a well-authenticated Colonial windmill.

There is a rock on the storm-swept beach of Nomansland which bears an indubitable record in runic letters and a date in Roman numerals. I have studied it carefully, and when I report upon my conclusions I shall give what I believe to be convincing evidence that it was carved certainly not more than a hundred years ago and probably at some time within the present century.

The only other pertinent record in this vicinity is that of the rock lying on the shore near the base of Mount Hope. At the time when I wrote about it some years ago, it was widely believed that it was a Norse runic inscription, but so far as I knew no attempt had been made to translate it except an absurd and unsupported one by Ernest Fales. Very recently I have learned of an unpublished translation by a reputable scholar. I am glad to acknowledge my indebtedness to Mrs. Dorothy M. Barry of Portland, who has made it possible to add it to the historical data concerning this interesting rock.

On January 29, 1899, John E. Mullaly of Fall River, and a companion whose initials were B E G, chalked the characters on the rock as they saw them, photographed them (see illustration herewith), and sent the photograph to Professor Adrian Scott. Scott had been earlier connected with Brown University as a teacher of Germanic and Scandinavian Philology. He found it possible to see the charac-



THE MOUNT HOPE INSCRIPTION AS PHOTOGRAPHED IN 1899

ters as runic letters, and expressed complete confidence that he had read them correctly. I condense his exposition as much as possible. Anyone can see what Scott believed that he found if he will consult a Table of Runic Letters;* select the ones representing our letters "hallr vakkzt," writing the *l* and *k* only once but attaching a horizontal line underneath each as a sign of its doubling; and then imagine all these letters as rotated a quarter-turn to the right so as to lie sidewise in the line instead of upright. The "hallr" is the nominative form of the proper name "Hall;" the verb "vakka" means "to stray," and the "-zt" is the reflexive sign. Therefore, according to Scott, the whole means: "Hall went astray of himself and was lost here."

There are plenty of good reasons for rejecting this reading of the inscription. The lines as chalked in 1899 are shown in poor perspective, some of them are blurred, and my own later studies prove that many were mistakenly drawn. Scott did not accept them exactly as drawn in more

*Runic letters were variable. The Table in the Encyclopedia Americana gives them about as Scott wrote them, except that the runic *u* is to be used for *v*, and *z* is to be taken as the reverse of *t*.

than three or four cases, but supplied much by his own imagination. The message that he found would have been an unbelievably trivial thing for the Northmen to have taken pains to carve, when they left no other and more significant record anywhere on the coast of America. My own Cherokee-Wampanoag reading, attributed to about the year 1834, still remains the most probably correct rendering of the inscription.

In spite of repeated disappointments of the hope that alleged Norse remains may prove to be genuine, new attempts to find and defend them continually arise. Besides actual inscriptions, another class of marks upon rocks must engage our attention in this connection, such as glacial scorings, weathering phenomena, natural veins or intrusions in the rock, or marks due to other natural causes; or such as those produced accidentally by human agency in the course of grinding or ploughing operations. These are seized upon sometimes by the ardent advocates of runic inscriptions as examples of Norse writing. A recent case of this sort deserves examination.

Two letters were received by this Society last August, reporting the existence of a rock with mysterious markings at Chopmist Orchards in North Scituate. The correspondents were very fair in their attitude toward it. As one of them said: "I do not consider myself qualified to give an opinion on the characters; my judgment might be influenced by my hopes." Their hopes, evidently, were that the markings might turn out to be a runic record of genuine antiquity. No one can dispute their right to such a hope.

The problem having been placed in my hands, I went with one of the writers to examine the rock. It is a flattish stone, whose appearance on its marked face is shown in the accompanying photograph. It lies close to the base of a stone wall and evidently has been removed at some time in the past from somewhere within the neighboring orchard. The same is true of numerous other stones lying close to the wall, whose presence there is due clearly to no other cause

A PLOUGH-SCORED ROCK AT CHOPMIST ORCHARDS

than that they had become nuisances in the course of long-ago ploughing of the field.

The right edge of the stone as the photograph shows it measures about 2 feet 7 inches, the base 2 feet 4 inches, the left edge so far as it runs straight about 1 foot 6 inches. The thickness is 1 foot 3 inches at the right side, tapering uniformly to a thin edge at the left. The weight is about 500 pounds. The rock is fine-grained granite. The marked surface is almost flat, with the upper half much pitted and weathered and the lower half smooth, and with a slight angle between the two parts. It seems to have been shaped by glacial action, and not by artificial dressing as one observer suggested. The marks are from 6 to 8 inches long, about ½ inch wide, with a smooth rounded section.

It will be noticed that all the sure scored lines run almost straight in one direction only, vertically in the photograph,

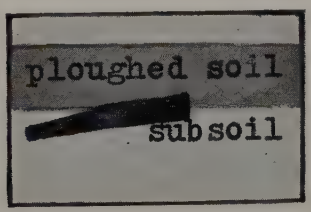
with only slight deviations in direction or curvature. Additional side-lines attached to them, such as would be necessary in order to make them resemble letters of any alphabet, runic or other, have been surmised. I am very sure that all such supposed additional marks are matters of guess-work only, with no support justifying one guess in preference to a dozen others, and are based actually upon weatherings of the rock. Whatever their origin, they are of no least value as evidence of ancient Norse wanderings, and one who seeks signs of the latter can not profitably appeal to any such dubious scratches and pittings in support of his belief.

The clear and indubitable scratches on this stone can be understood most satisfactorily as the scorings of a plough. To this opinion my correspondents have objected that farmers whom they have talked with are agreed that no team of horses would be powerful enough to make marks of such depth on granite, and that no plough could withstand the impact without breaking. The argument which I present below is essentially a repetition of what I have written to them in reply.

The earliest suggestion that markings of this kind could be made by plough was made to me many years ago at Sachuest Point by a farmer, by the side of whose field lay a stone on which I saw what at first I suspected might possibly be Indian pictographs. But he told me that the marks were made by plough, or some by crowbar in getting it out of the field. This was a new idea to me; but on looking around, I found a number of other stones similarly marked lying on the borders of the field and all evidently taken out from it. Since then, searching for Indian relics, I have seen many other examples of similar scorings on stones. There is hardly any possibility that the marks I have in mind were made in any other manner than by a plough. There is no doubt that in a stony field the plough often scrapes along on stones without damage to itself. A big stone lying high enough up to be seen would be avoided, by going around or by lifting over. But one far enough under the surface not to

be a very serious obstacle—though it might become such later by frost-heaving or soil-erosion or otherwise—would be scratched by the plough year after year in different places and to different depths, and no farmer would know or care how deeply he had scratched it if didn't annoy him much.

The ice-age was lavish in its gifts of glacial boulders to the fields of New England. In relatively few of them, of course, are the boulders such flattish slabs as we are considering; but such cases exist in fair numbers. In any one of them, few of the stones would be likely to lie with the upper surface nearly parallel to the surface of the ground and at just the right depth to engage the nose of a plough lightly; but there might easily be a number of them; and some of them might become worse obstacles as time went on, and eventually get dug out. The Chopmist stone may have lain originally with the now marked half of its face projecting just a little into the tilled soil, where it would become gradually roughened by weathering influences; and with the smooth half buried in the subsoil and so protected from such decay. If the ploughing was done repeatedly in the



same direction, along the gentle upslope of the stone, the plough would slide across it without much difficulty. It would get hit, year after year, in different places, rarely if ever twice in exactly the same way. A number of nearly parallel marks would be made upon it, sometimes running straight, sometimes a little curved. If now such natural agencies as I have mentioned at last brought the stone nearer to the surface and made it more of an obstacle, or if the direction of ploughing was reversed so that the stone

was hit squarely against its most projecting part, then conceivably the plough might break; but also it might happen that a stone no heavier than this would get dislodged slightly. In either case, the farmer might become exasperated enough to dig it out. The abundance of flattish stones now lying in and alongside such a field as that at Chopmist, and the one at Sachuest Point, and elsewhere, shows that farmers have often gone to that trouble. It is very sure that they would rarely take any interest in the marks that had previously been made on the stones. They might have later beliefs that the strength of horses and the resistance of ploughs to breaking would be inadequate for the production of such grooves as we find on the Chopmist stone. But they would not have founded those opinions upon actual observation.

I feel sure that the only Chopmist marks which can be accepted as due to human agency are the approximately vertical ones. If not made by plough, I would have to believe that they were somehow made by nature, perhaps as glacial scratches. A few further considerations are strongly in favor of the plough theory. The fields where I have observed stones thus marked have been under cultivation for a very long time. In old days oxen were used for cultivation much more often than horses. Oxen are more powerful and patient. Their slower motion and persistent pull would involve much less strain upon the plough and would produce these effects more easily. I am assured by an expert geologist, Professor Charles W. Brown, that fine-grained granite would take such marks without difficulty; though hard, it is not too resistant to abrasion. Finally, a pretty fair test of a theory is its capacity to serve as basis for successful prediction. After studying the Chopmist stone, I expressed the belief that there must be other stones within the orchard or alongside it, with similar markings on them; and without giving much time to the search, we found one lying on the stone wall.

In the light of these considerations, a stone found in

Hampton, New Hampshire, becomes a useful bit of corroborative evidence. I have spoken of it somewhat dubiously in earlier writings. Since then I have found the original and full description of it, in the Boston Weekly Journal for July 18, 1902. The writer says that the stone had been discovered not more than 20 years earlier, that it lies in the earth with its face near the top of the ground, and that the field has been under tillage for over 150 years. This description, and the pictures of the markings (one version of which I published in my book on "Dighton Rock") leave me confident that it is another case of plough-marks. Yet, along with many other impossible cases, it has been confidently accepted by many persons as a relic of the Northmen.

There are only two alleged runic records anywhere in America about which there is any present controversy: those at Yarmouth in Nova Scotia and at Kensington in Minnesota. I leave them in the hands of the disputants. Within the limits of New England, nothing which has ever yet been advocated as a material relic or record of the Vinland voyages has the least chance of being accepted by competent scholars as anything of the sort.

New Publications of Rhode Island Interest

A History of South Kingstown by Charles Comstock, 1806, has been privately reprinted by William Davis Miller, Esq.

A Letter written by Maj. John Talcott from Mr. Stanton's at Quonocontaug, July 4, 1677 has been issued by the Society of Colonial Wars in Rhode Island as a pamphlet of 15 pages, including two maps by Norman M. Isham.

More Recollections of the Hoppin Family collected by Eliza Hoppin Richmond Waller, December, 1934, is a pamphlet of 22 pages, containing an account of her family written in 1868 by Mrs. Harriet Dunn Hoppin ("Mother

Auton") and notes upon Claude Gabriel, the colored man who became body servant to the Czar Alexander.

A sermon on the Right Rev. George Berkeley, D.D., Bishop of Cloyne, preached by the Rev. A. A. Luce, D.D., on Sept. 12, 1934, and printed in the *Church of Ireland Gazette* for Sept. 28, 1934, has been presented by Mrs. Richard Rathborne Graham.

Three early pictures of the French fleet at Newport are reproduced in the February 1935 issue of the *United States Naval Institute Proceedings;* D'Estaing forcing the entrance into Newport, August 8, 1778 (p. 155), The French fleet leaving the Newport offing for Boston, August 21, 1778(page 157), and Arrival of French army and escort, 1780 (page 160).

Notes

The following persons have been elected to membership in the Society:

Mr. Henry L. P. Beckwith
Rev. Arthur H. Bradford
Mr. Edgar Brunschwig
Miss Adelaide Knight
Mrs. Philip C. Sheldon
Mrs. Helen C. Vose

The Rhode Island Historical Society reminds its members and friends of its very special interest in the materials of local history. Early pamphlets or books printed in Rhode Island, newspapers or periodicals published in Rhode Island, and printed or manuscript material bearing on Rhode Island history are earnestly solicited as gifts. At the present time the Society is particularly desirous of obtaining the following books:

Newport Directory 1934
Pawtucket Directory 1934
Providence Directory 1935
Woonsocket Directory 1934
Westerly Directory 1933-34
Providence Tax Book 1934
Cranston Tax Book 1934
Warwick Tax Book 1934
Pawtucket Tax Book 1934

FACADE OF GABRIEL BERNON'S HOUSE ON NORTH MAIN ST., PROVIDENCE

From pencil sketch drawn by Zachariah Allen from memory, now in the Society's library

Rhode Island Historical Society
Treasurer's Report

INCOME ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR 1934

Receipts

Annual Dues	$2,400.00
Dividends and Interest	4,047.55
Rental of Rooms	100.00
State Appropriation	1,500.00
	$8,047.55
Expenditures exceed income	182.87
	$8,230.42

Expenditures

Binding	$ 116.33
Books	340.67
Electric Light and Gas	36.40
Lectures and Exhibitions	139.84
Expense	116.00
Grounds and Building	358.33
Heating	700.00
Newspaper	19.10
Publication	582.36
Salaries	5,580.00
Supplies	169.61
Telephone	63.78
Water	8.00
	$8,230.42

PRINCIPAL ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR 1934

Receipts

Reserve Fund	$ 9.00
Revolving Publication Fund	35.71
New York Central Railroad Company, Rights Sold	111.85
	$ 156.56
Balance January 1, 1934	2,496.69
	$2,653.25

Payments

Reserve Fund	$ 77.99
Balance December 31, 1934	2,575.26
	$2,653.25

STATEMENT OF CONDITION, DECEMBER 31, 1934

Assets

Grounds and Building	$ 25,000.00

Investments:

Bonds

$4,000.	Cedars Rapids Mfg. & Power Co. 1st 5s, 1953	$3,228.88
3,000.	Central Mfg. District 4½s, 1941	3,000.00
3,000.	Cleveland Elec. Illuminating Co. 5s, 1939	2,565.42
4,000.	Dominion of Government of Canada, 5s, 1952	4,003.91
1,000.	Western Electric Co. 5s, 1944	998.17
4,000.	61 Broadway Bldg., 1st Mtge. 5½s, 1950	4,000.00
4,000.	Minnesota Power & Light Co. 1st 5s, 1955	3,930.00
4,000.	Monongahela Valley Traction Co. 1st 5s, 1942	3,685.00
2,000.	Ohio Power Co. 1st & Ref. 5s, 1952	1,974.00
2,000.	Narragansett Electric Co. 1st 5s, 1957	1,980.00
2,000.	Shell Union Oil Corporation 5s, 1947	1,979.00
2,000.	Koppers Gas & Coke Co. 5s, 1947	1,962.00
1,000.	Indianapolis Power & Light Co. 1st 5s, 1957	994.50
1,000.	Texas Power & Light Co. 1st Ref. 5s, 1956	1,021.25
1,000.	Pennsylvania Railroad Co. Deb. 4½s, 1970	922.50
1,000.	Pennsylvania Water & Power Co. 1st 5s, 1940	1,005.42

STOCKS

54 shs. New York Central Railroad Co.	$3,654.62	
125 shs. Pennsylvania Railroad Co.	7,638.35	
30 shs. Lehigh Valley Railroad Co.	2,112.50	
7 shs. Lehigh Valley Coal Corp'n., Pfd.	235.39	
40 shs. Milwaukee Electric Railway & Light Co., Pfd.	3,900.00	
64 shs. American Telephone & Telegraph Co.	5,960.05	
350 shs. Providence Gas Co.	5,755.68	
15 shs. Providence National Bank 30 shs. Merchants' National Bank Bldg.	1,800.00	
45 shs. Blackstone Canal National Bank	1,050.00	
52 shs. Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Rwy. Co., Common	6,247.85	
20 shs. American Power & Light Co.	1,696.50	
30 shs. Standard Gas & Electric Co. 4% Pfd.	1,906.50	
35 shs. Public Service Corp'n. of N. J. 5% Pfd.	3,327.63	
10 shs. Public Service Corp'n. of N. J. 5% Pfd.	990.00	
10 shs. Electric Bond & Share Co. 5% Pfd.	922.00	
		84,447.62
Cash on hand—$1,484.81 Inc. 2,575.26 Princ.		4,060.07
		$113,507.69

LIABILITIES

Equipment Fund		$ 25,000.00
Permanent Endowment Fund:		
Samuel M. Noyes	$12,000.00	
Henry J. Steere	10,000.00	
James H. Bugbee	6,000.00	
Charles H. Smith	5,000.00	
William H. Potter	3,000.00	
Charles W. Parsons	4,000.00	
Esek A. Jillson	2,000.00	
John Wilson Smith	1,000.00	

William G. Weld	$1,000.00	
Charles C. Hoskins	1,000.00	
Charles H. Atwood	1,000.00	
Edwin P. Anthony	4,000.00	
John F. Street	1,000.00	
George L. Shepley	5,000.00	
Franklin Lyceum Memorial	734.52	
		$56,734.52
Publication Fund:		
Robert P. Brown	$ 2,000.00	
Ira P. Peck	1,000.00	
William Gammell	1,000.00	
Albert J. Jones	1,000.00	
William Ely	1,000.00	
Julia Bullock	500.00	
Charles H. Smith	100.00	
		6,600.00
Life Membership		5,600.00
Book Fund		3,012.41
Reserve Fund		974.13
Revolving Publication Fund		200.95
Surplus		13,900.87
Surplus Income Account		1,484.81
		$113,507.69

Providence, R. I., January 8th, 1935.

Respectfully submitted,

G. A. HARRINGTON,
Treasurer

We have examined the securities belonging to the Society and find them in agreement with the list herewith.

WILLIAM DAVIS MILLER
JOHN H. WELLS

Form of Legacy

"I give and bequeath to the Rhode Island Historical Society the sum of ..... dollars."

Roger Williams Press E. A. Johnson Co.

PROVIDENCE